

BEACH STIPEND COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Oct. 16, 2014, 6:30 PM

OL TOWN HALL MEETING HALL

In attendance: BJ Bernblum, Fred Callahan, Keith Coakley, Beth Cote, Rich Dakin, Wendy Gavin, and First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder.

- 1. Approval of Minutes:** Chairman Keith Coakley asked if there were any addition or changes to minutes from the September 23, 2014 meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved.

- 2.** Keith Coakley began the meeting by asking if any information needed to be shared before we begin the agenda of the meeting. Fred Callahan shared a letter from 1941. In the letter Point O' Woods Beach Association had an agreement with the town of Old Lyme that gave 25% of taxes that were collected from the association back to the association. Fred gave the letter to First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder, and she said she would look through it. Keith Coakley shared that Miami Beach's beach maintenance budget was \$8,000, something we wanted to know from the last meeting. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder was going to ask the Old Lyme police to estimate what it would cost to hire the extra personal to off set beach cost for the summer. She did not have time to do this, so we tabled this until our next meeting. It would be a theoretical estimate, as we have no actual data on the exact cost. Keith Coakley asked, " Might it be zero?" He asked, "Would there actually be an increase in town police needed if we were doing the beach policing instead of the private securities doing it?" "Could the Old Lyme police adequately respond?" BJ Bernblum said that we could reframe the question. He thought the police could take a guess at the quantity of calls the police would get without the private security being there. Question A: How much would it cost if you paid the existing staff overtime? Question B: If there were part time police available how much would that cost? Keith Coakley introduced Question C: Could the current force handle those extra calls? We are not going to hold anyone accountable for the number given; we just want a best estimate.

- 3. Determine to What Extent and in What Manner to Subsidize the Following Beach Association Expenditures:**
 - Policing: Keith Coakley suggested we wait until we have more information from the police to discuss this. Rick Dakin agreed.
 - Beach Cleaning at White Sands Beach
 - Snow Removal at White Sands Beach
 - Beach Cleaning at Miami Beach
 - Pond Road Maintenance/Snow Removal at Miami Beach
 - Club House Subsidy at Roger's LakeFred Callahan said he believes that all of the above were legitimate reasons for stipends because of the impact of the public on these things. These things could be reasons why the town should give a stipend to the beach associations. These are items up for discussion. It was then stated that we did not decide affirmatively that these should definitely be subsidized. Rich Dakin commented that he did not see it as our charge to decide the amount of the expenditure. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder said the charge of the committee does not preclude this, and that it would be helpful if we made some suggestions. The question is do we know the cost of these things. What is the incremental cost to the

association because of public usage? Is there a way to determine that? We haven't ruled these things out, but have we ruled these things in?

Do we have enough information? How can they quantify the residence use of the beach causes \$1,000.00 worth of trash pick-up a year vs. what is caused by others? Fred Callahan said that maybe we could make a recommendation that the town gives a stipend for these things, but it is the Board of Finance's job to determine how much. Let the beach associations go to the board and ask. BJ Bernblum stated that he thought our charge was to decide whether there is anything that should be reason to give a stipend and after that we should make a suggestion about the amount. Rich Dakin added that we do not ask the private associations to account for the use of the stipend. We give them a check. There is no accounting for it. He thinks the application needs to be specific to represent what the money will be used for. What do they need the money for, so that the items are legitimate. BJ Bernblum stated that the charge is to provide the board of selectmen with policy recommendation for public stipends to private associations. Those words do not say the quantity needs to be a part of the charge. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder said that the selectmen(women) were looking for as much information from this committee as possible. Whether it is a percentage or amount not to exceed. Consider it on these costs for the association because there is a saving to the town. The whole idea is to justify something that we can live with moving forward. We want to be able to show that there is a good reason to give money to the beach association and not just because they are paying too much in taxes. One thing that she would not go for is if we say something like, pay 50% of the security budget of the beach association. Then the town has no control over that. It doesn't give us any boundaries or control over the security budgets.

BJ asked us to consider what the impact of the stipend is on the town budget? We need to consider if the line item in the budget will decrease or increase as we move forward. Are we talking about a lot of money or a modest amount of money? Keith Coakley stated as a taxpayer he wants to know if we are paying that much out, are we getting that much back? Beyond that, if we knew it was saving the town 80,000 a year, how do we allocate that? The committee went on to discuss that some associations might have a large budget for security based because they can afford it and another might not have that big of a budget. It is subjective. Some kind of an allocation not based on budget, maybe tax, properties, number of houses, maybe it is a frozen sum, maybe it dwindles over time. There are a lot of ways to look at this. There are other associations that may want the stipend but are not presently getting it. They should not be excluded from the stipend if it is deemed that they qualify as the rest of the associations do.

The committee decided to discuss if the town did give money for security, how would the money be divided up? Wendy Gavin said that she feels we have not been able to come up with a fair way to give the stipend. She suggested maybe we should just hire a police officer. BJ Bernblum said that it would be a lot different to hire one police officer at a higher pay rate that is responsible for all the beaches versus hiring private security at a lower cost that would be at each beach. The security at each beach helps problems be avoided. If we rely on police patrol, one police officer is not going to be at every beach. He does not believe that the one police officer will be able to do as a good a job as the private security at each beach. Could the different beach associations go to the town and make an argument that they are saving the town money by having private security? Beth Cote asked, "Is there someone on the police force that can tell us the public impact on the different beaches? It seems like

some beaches have more public impact than others.” First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder said that would be a guess. She thinks we could assess that based on the information we have. Discussion continued on how we should determine the amount to give. Discussion included: should we look at size of beach, number of homes, give a certain percentage and put a cap on it, and proximity to public access. If we come up with a formula any association that thinks it is not fair could address the town, and let the town know why they believe they should get more money. Beth Cote raised the point as to what might be driving the cost of security and therefore the saving to the town in policing. Keith Coakley asked, “Is it way off base to ask the police how they might allocate it? Would they know what the drivers are and what the impact would be?” First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder said that we could make an assumption, 12 weeks of the year, 2 shifts 3 days a week and come up with a number. BJ Bernblum stated that there is a correlation between the numbers of housing units to the amount spent on security. This could be one that we look at that is objective. Rich Dakin said he likes the idea of looking at the beaches and their proximity for public impact. Keith Coakley said we do not have any idea how that proximity impacts policing. For example, one argument is the police are always at the end of Sound View, so maybe this helps the beaches in close proximity. It was stated that for the purpose of time, we needed to move on. BJ Bernblum said he did not think we should bang our heads against the wall too hard. We are not going to have the data to estimate the saving to the town for each beach association. We should come up with a formula that is objective and fair and give individual associations the right to object if they do not feel it is fair to them. We tabled the rest of the bullets under number 2 on the agenda for the next meeting.

4. Communication: None

5. Schedule future meetings: Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 27, 2014 at 6:30 PM.

5. Public Comment: Mike Girard president of the Miami Beach Association suggested that we define the communities that would qualify or be eligible for a stipend. Then he suggested that we look at access and exposure to public nuisances. Miami Beach is open to the public so they have this issue. He said the stipend is very important to them. He thinks it is low compared to their exposure to public nuisances. It is not the amount of homes but the number of people that can get onto their beach that causes problems. Mark Mongillo vice president Miami Beach Association agreed we should put a cap on the amount. He thinks we need to compare apples to apples. Miami Beach only has security on the weekends. Some associations have more than that. He thinks you need to consider safety, health, and economy. Because you have a beach community it behooves this committee to look at these things. When you are taking a look at the number of units, it may or may not be helpful. It is not one size fits all. Things need to be considered case by case. The beach committees contribute 7 million dollars in taxes to the town. He said, “As far as I know that is your school budget.” He went on to say that that is a sizable amount that the beach communities are paying for. The town’s people need to take this into consideration. Scott Boulanger Miami Beach Association asked that we be sure the agenda and the minutes were posted from each meeting. He went on to say that a stipend is given to the Federation of Beaches and that should probably not be considered in this committee because that was something

that was drawn up with the Board of Finance that was an effort of the Federation of Beaches and the town of Old Lyme. That part of the stipend budget should be pushed off. One other item he brought up was that the town of Old Lyme receives \$161, 000.00 in revenue that comes in from the beaches. The \$92,000.00 stipend give to the beaches that is minus the \$9,000.00 given to the Federation of Beaches is not an unreasonable number. There is a benefit to the town in terms of revenue. The town of Old Lyme makes money off the public beaches with the selling of stickers. One of the things the security provides is a present and that provides a benefit that keeps things from happening. That is what these stipends are supporting. A presence that keeps things from starting up.

7. Adjournment: Keith Coakley adjourns meeting.